

UNCLASSIFIED

Department of State

3/5/79

INCOMING
TELEGRAM

AK057

PAGE 01 BUENOS 01763 01 OF 02 052146Z
ACTION ARA-15

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BUENOS 01763 01 OF 02 052146Z

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 1-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 10-14
TRSE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 EUR-12
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O 052030Z MAR 79
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9715

SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 1763

E.O. 12065 XDS-1 3-5-09 (CASTRO, RAUL N) OR-M
TAGS AR, SHUM
SUBJECT (C) AMBASSADOR AND GENERALS LEPORI AND GRAFFIGNA DISCUSS
HUMAN RIGHTS

1. -ENTIRE TEXT)

2. SUMMARY: MARCH 2-4 I WENT TO MENDOZA FOR THE WINE HARVEST FESTIVAL WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY AIR FORCE COMMANDER AND JUNTA MEMBER GRAFFIGNA AND BY THE LOCAL ARMY COMMANDER BRIGADIER GENERAL MARIO LEPORI. GRAFFIGNA ATTACKED ME OVER US HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY BUT BACKED DOWN WHEN FACED WITH CLAIMS OF DISAPPEARANCES. HE PROFESSED ADMIRATION FOR THE US, AND THEN HE TOLD ME HE HAD SENT A PURCHASING MISSION TO THE USSR. SUBSEQUENTLY, GENERAL LEPORI SAID HE THOUGH GRAFFIGNA WAS ALL WET IN BOTH SUBSTANCE AND TACTICS OF HANDLING OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. LEPORI STRONGLY ASSERTED THERE WOULD BE NO DISAPPEARANCES IN HIS MILITARY DISTRICT DURING HIS COMMAND. END SUMMARY.

3. ON SATURDAY, MARCH 3, GOVERNOR FERNANDEZ OF MENDOZA PROVINCE GAVE AN ASADO (LUNCHEON) IN HONOR OF MAJOR GENERAL GRAFFIGNA, AIR FORCE COMMANDER AND JUNTA MEMBER. AT THAT LUNCHEON GRAFFIGNA WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF USG POLICY ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND HIS REMARKS WERE DIRECTED AT ME. WE WENT ROUND AND ROUND AS I STRONGLY ATTEMPTED TO DEFLATE HIS ARGUMENTS. HE ESORTED TO ALL THE "CLICHES" ON HEARS IN THIS BUSINESS. HE SPOKE ABOUT THE "DIRTY WAS" AND HOW USG DIDN'T UNDERSTAND GOA'S PROBLEMS. AT THAT POINT, I TOLD GRAFFIGNA I HAD HEARD GENERAL VIDELA AND OTHER HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS MAKE PRO-NOUNCENENTS THAT "DIRTY WAS" WAS OVER AND HAD BEEN OVER FOR SOME TIME. I STATED IF THAT WAS THE CASE THEN WHAT WAS JUSTIFICATION FOR AVERAGING ABOUT 50 DISAPPEARANCES PER MONTH IN 1978. HE REALLY BLEW A FUSE ON THIS ONE AND RETORTED "THERE WERE NO DISAPPEARANCES IN 1978. THIS IS JUST PART OF A CONSPIRACY TO PLACE ARGENTINA IN A BAD LIGHT." I TOLD GRAFFIGNA I WAS MOST PLEASED TO KNOW THERE WERE NO DISAPPEARANCES IN 1978, BUT THAT I WOULD SEND TO HIS OFFICE A LIST OF DISAPPEARED PERSONS FOR 1978. I EXPLAINED WE WERE ANXIOUS TO GET HIS EXPLANATION SO USG COULD CORRECT ITS RECORDS. GRAFFIGNA REPLIED HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO GET EMBASSY LIST. (START COMMENT: HAVING HAD HIS BLUFF CALLED, GRAFFIGNA COOLED CONSIDERABLY AND PROCEEDED TO GO ON THE DEFENSIVE GIVING LAUDATORY REMARKS ABOUT USG AND GOA RELATIONS ETC. I AM WORKING ON THE LIST AND WILL PRESENT IT TO GRAFFIGNA ASAP AND COPY TO GENERAL VIDELA. END COMMENT)

4. THOSE PRESENT DURING GRAFFIGNA'S HUMAN RIGHTS DISSERTATION: THE HOST, AIR FORCE BRIG. MAJOR FERNANDEZ, GOVERNOR OF MENDOZA PROVINCE, WAS RELATIVELY SILENT, BUT FROM TIME TO TIME HE WOULD AGREE WITH GRAFFIGNA. ADMIRAL FRAGA, MINISTER OF SOCIAL WELFARE, WHO TIPS THE SCALES AT ABOUT 250 LBS, WOULD OCCASIONALLY EMIT A DISCORDANT NOTE -- SIMILAR TO A CROAK BUT NOT QUITE WITHIN THE DICIBLE OF A BURP -- TO EXPRESS ACQUIESCENCE WITH GRAFFIGNA. MINISTER OF EDUCATION LLERENA AMADEO, OF PIOUS REPUTATION, SAT AT MY LEFT AND STRATEGICALLY IN RHYTHMICAL FASHION WOULD LOOK AT THE HEAVENS, BUT ONLY TO EASE THE FLOW OF THE RED-WHITE WINE

INTAKE. HIS CONTRIBUTION WAS CRITICISM OF USG HANDLING OF ITS BLACK CONSTITUENCY. I REMINDED HIM OF MEMBERSHIP OF BLACK CITIZENS IN USG CABINET, PLUS US SUPREME COURT, HIGH RANKING MILITARY OFFICERS, DIPLOMACY, ETC. I ALSO TOLD HIM WE HAD A LONGS WAYS TO GO, BUT USG WAS HONESTLY ATTEMPTING TO MAKE IT A BETTER WORLD. I THEN INQUIRED THAT OF ALMOST ONE-HALF MILLION JEWS IN ARGENTINA, I HAD NEVER HEARD OF A GENERAL OR ADMIRAL IN GOA'S ARMED FORCES. GRAFFIGNA THEN REPLIED IT WAS ONLY DUE TO TRADITION. I THEN ASKED HIM OF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF TEN JEWS TRIED TO BECOME AIR FORCE OFFICERS. RELUCTANTLY, GRAFFIGNA ADMITTED THEY WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO PURSUE A MILITARY CAREER. WITH THIS, SILENCE PREVAILED FOLLOWED BY A SUDDEN SHIFT INTO DISCUSSING THE MERITS OF CANDIDATE FOR QUEEN OF THE WINE FESTIVAL IN MENDOZA. THE GOVERNOR OF SAN JUAN PROVINCE WHO SAT AT MY RIGHT MADE HIMSELF CONSPICUOUS BY HIS SILENCE. HE WOULD ONLY OPEN HIS MOUTH TO EAT AND TO PARTAKE OF THE GOOD WINE. GENERAL MARIO LEPORI, COMMANDER OF THE 8TH MOUNTAIN REGIMENT, REMAINED STOIC THROUGHOUT THE SPORT CALLED "GET THE USG," BUT HE DID VENTURE A COMMENT STATING GOA WAS MAKING VAST IMPROVEMENTS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD. THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR SAT OPPOSITE ME. AFTER THE CONSUMPTION OF MANY GALLONS OF WINE, THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR BECAME INSPIRED BY OFFERING INAUDIBLE TOASTS ABOUT HOW ARGENTINA WAS HISPANIC THUS TRADE AND ALL SHOULD BE WITH THE MOTHER-LAND.

5. GOA'S PURCHASES FROM SOVIET UNION: GRAFFIGNA REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES USG HAD BECOME TOTALLY UNRELIABLE. HE REFERRED TO USG DESERTATION OF TAIWAN AND IRAN. GRAFFIGNA SAID US INFLUENCE IN WORLD OF NATIONS WAS WANING DUE TO LACK OF SUPPORT OF ITS FRIENDS IN TIMES OF NEED. HE THEN MADE A POINT BY STATING GOA WAS FORCED TO SEND EIGHT OFFICERS TO THE SOVIET UNION TO PURCHASE MILITARY MATERIAL. HE LOOKED AT ME AND I SAID I KNEW ALL ABOUT IT. GRAFFIGNA RESPONDED BY SAYING HE WAS ADMITTING THE CURRENT PRESENCE OF EIGHT ARGENTINA OFFICERS IN RUSSIA ONLY BECAUSE HE KNEW USG WAS AWARE OF IT. GRAFFIGNA THEN WENT INTO A SONG AND DANCE ACT OF HOW GOA WAS ANTI-COMMUNIST AND WOULD NEVER GO COMMUNIST. HE SAID DUE TO USG LACK OF UNDERSTANDING GOA WAS BEING FORCED TO PURCHASE THEIR EQUIPMENT FROM THE SOVIETS. (EMBASSY IS LOOKING INTO THE REPORT OF THE ARGENTINE PURCHASING COMMISSION IN THE USSR.)

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

(X) Release () Excise () Deny

Exemption(s):

Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full

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Date Declassify on Reason

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UNCLASSIFIED [REDACTED] Department of State

INCOMING
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PAGE 01 BUENOS 01763 02 OF 02 052126Z
ACTION ARA-15

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-14
TRSE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 EUR-12
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9716

[REDACTED] SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 1763

6. THE FOLLOWING DAY BRIG. GENERAL LEPORI HOSTED A WINE EMPANADA BRUNCH AT THE OFFICER'S CLUB IN THE ARMY COMMAND IN MENDOZA FOR THE US ARMY BAND AND THE JUMPING AMBASSADORS (PARACHUTE TEAM) BOTH VISITING FROM THE CANAL ZONE. HE GAVE US A WARM WELCOME IN ENGLISH AND REMINISCED ABOUT HIS DAYS IN THE US. DURING OUT LATER CONVERSATION GENERAL LEPORI COMMENTED ON GRAFFIGNA'S CRITICISM OF THE US AT THE LUNCHEON ON THE PREVIOUS DAY. HE SAID HETHOUGHT GRAFFIGNA WAS WRONG BOTH IN SUBSTANCE OF THE POSITION AND IN THE MANNER IN WHICH HE BROUGHT UP THE HUMAN RIGHTS DISCUSSION DURING THE WINE ORGY HELD UNDER THE PRETEXT OF AN ASADO. HE SAID GRAFFIGNA COULD NOT DISCLAIM DISAPPEARANCES IN 1978 AND HOPED I WOULD FURNISH HIM A LIST OF THE DISAPPEARED SO HE WOULD HAVE TO EAT CROW. THE GENERAL CONTINUED THAT HE KNEW I WAS ON GOOD TERMS WITH GENERALS VIDELA AND VIOLA AND HE WANTED ME TO KNOW HE HAD BEEN SENT TO MENDOZA TO IMPLEMENT THEIR POLICIES. WITHOUT PROMPTING HE SAID "SO LONG AS I AM COMMANDER OF THIS AREA THERE WILL NOT BE ONE SINGLE DISAPPEARANCE. I HAVE MADE IT CLEAR TO ALL AUTHORITIES IF THERE IS TO BE AN ARREST IT MUST BE MADE BY THE POLICE, CHARGES FILED AND PROCESSED THROUGH THE COURTS." HE REITERATED, "I WILL NOT TOLERATE DISAPPEARANCES." HE TOLD ME THERE WERE SEVERAL UNCHARGED PEOPLE BEING HELD IN MENDOZA AREA JAILS AND HE WOULD INSIST ON THESE PEOPLE BEING RELEASED OR ELSE HAVING CHARGES FILED AGAINST THEM SO THE COURTS WOULD TAKE JURISDICTION.

7. COMMENT: FOR TWO DAYS I KEPT RUNNING INTO GRAFFIGNA, GENERAL LEPORI AND ALL THE ACTORS WHO PLAYED IN THE DRAMA I HAVE DESCRIBED HEREIN. GRAFFIGNA, FOREMOST, KEPT TELLING ME OUR PAST DISCUSSIONS WERE AMONG FRIENDS. HE CONTINUED MAKING STRONG PRONOUNCEMENTS OF HIS ADMIRATION FOR US. ALL IN ALL, EVERYTHING ENDED IN GOOD SPIRITS AND IN A FINAL TONE OF FRIENDSHIP. GENERAL LEPORI IMPRESSED ME WITH HIS FERVENT DESIRE TO RETURN TO THE RULE OF LAW. ANOTHER SOURCE, CONSIDERED HIGHLY RELIABLE, INFORMED ME OF POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING GOVERNORS IN MENDOZA PROVINCE AND APPOINTING A RETIRED ARMY OFFICER. THIS WOULD MAKE MENDOZA AN ARMY STRONGHOLD IN LIEU OF AIR FORCE DOMINATION.
CASTRO

*Who
Approved
th's*

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